

Back to the future

Volume I

Executive Summary

Thirty Years of Minnesota
Juvenile Justice Data
1980-2010

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
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Introduction

In 1980, the United States was on the verge of a spike in juvenile crime that would strain the resources of the juvenile justice system, challenge the resilience of communities, and have lasting repercussions on both public policy and public sentiment regarding youth offenders.

Youth involvement in crime began to increase in the mid-1980s and rose precipitously through the mid-1990s. Of particular concern to policy makers and communities was the increase in violent crime. A cadre of academic scholars and criminologists publically warned of a new breed of ‘superpredators’ who were unique in their brutality and remorselessness.¹ It was projected that these offenders would grow in number prompting a negative, fear-based public perception of juveniles.²

Contrary to the predictions of many scholars in the field of criminology, juvenile crime not only peaked in the late-1990s but was followed by a significant pattern of decline. Ten years later, youth involvement in the juvenile justice system has continued to decline and now reflects some of the lowest levels in 30 years or more. Criminologists continue to hypothesize and identify what factors contributed to the sudden and continuous decline in juvenile delinquency in the new millennium.

Minnesota’s juvenile justice data mirror the rise and fall of youth involvement in crime observed nationally. In 2010, both the volume of youth arrests and the rate of youth arrests were comparable to figures recorded in 1980, before the juvenile crime wave began.^a

The title of this report, *Back to the Future*, is an homage to the 1980s cinema blockbuster of the same name, in which a teenaged Michael J. Fox accidentally travels back in time 30 years to 1955. While there, he inadvertently alters the course of his own future which he must be set right before returning to 1985. While his character is clear as to what must be done to set his future right, less clear are which, if any, juvenile justice policies and practices implemented in the 1980s and 1990s positively affected delinquent youth thirty years later.

Volume 1 of this report series is dedicated to the presentation of Minnesota’s juvenile justice data. Included are juvenile arrests; court volume; admissions to residential placements; and juvenile probation populations between 1980 and 2010. A second volume will be published exploring changes to juvenile justice policies and practices in Minnesota during the same timeframe.

^a Volume is the total number of events whereas rates are the number of events per 1,000 youth in the population.

Data Sources

In Minnesota, no single state agency is responsible for collecting, analyzing or disseminating data on youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Rather, three distinct state agencies collect data on youth. These agencies, in turn, are responsible for collecting data from more than 400 state and local law enforcement agencies; 87 county systems; 10 judicial districts; and hundreds of detention settings and correctional facilities around the state.

Arrest Data

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) is the state agency responsible for collecting data on adult and juvenile arrests. The BCA has been collecting arrest data since 1972 using the same data repository: The *Criminal Justice Reporting System (CJRS)*. Law enforcement agencies are required to submit arrest data to the BCA annually.

Court Data

The Minnesota State Court Administrators Office (SCAO) maintains the state's centralized court case management system: The *Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS)*. All criminal, juvenile, family and civil court cases are entered into this case management system from Minnesota's 10 judicial districts. In addition, *MNCIS* contains data on juveniles designated *Extended Jurisdiction Juveniles (EJJ)* and those *Certified* to adult criminal court in Minnesota.

Placement and Probation Data

The Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) maintains a central repository of information on all adults and juveniles in the state who are on probation or supervised release from state prisons. The DOC also monitors the number and characteristics of adults and juveniles admitted to county jails, secure juvenile facilities, and state prisons. The centralized data system for corrections practitioners in the state is called the *Statewide Supervision System (S3)*.

Minnesota Arrests

Information collected from law enforcement agencies documenting arrest activity is perhaps the most important juvenile justice data set. Arrest is the primary mechanism through which youth enter the juvenile justice system. Law enforcement activity dictates the overall volume of juveniles entering the system, which subsequently affects the volume of youth moving into the judicial and corrections systems.

Minnesota Juvenile Arrest Volume

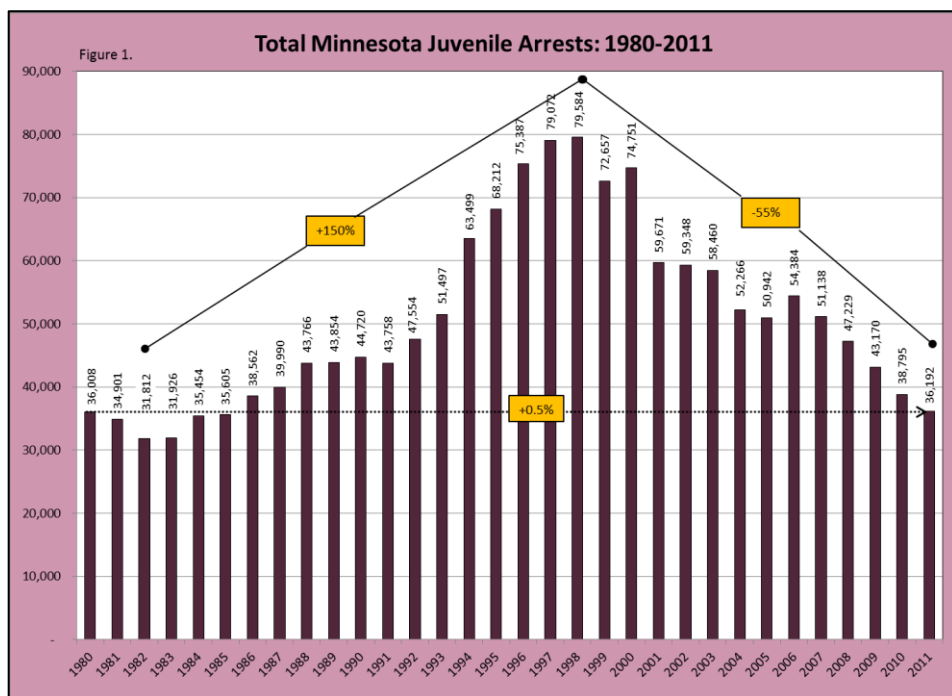
According to federal Uniform Crime Reporting definitions, a juvenile arrest is counted when a person under age 18 is physically arrested or when they are cited or summoned to appear in juvenile court or before other juvenile authorities. A youth need not be taken into physical custody to be counted as an

arrest. UCR data exclude other law enforcement contacts and times when youth are taken into custody for their own protection, such as neglect cases.³

UCR methodology typically requires only the most severe offense for which a youth is arrested to be counted even if the youth is charged with multiple offenses connected with one incident. Also, arrest data are a count of events, not individuals. If the same person is arrested three times in a given year, three arrests are counted.

In the mid-1990s, the number of juveniles arrested skyrocketed culminating in a record high of 79,584 arrests in 1998—over twice the number of juvenile arrests recorded in 1980 (Figure 1). Between 1982 and 1998, the number of juvenile arrests in Minnesota increased by 150 percent.⁴

The arrest trend abruptly reverses in 1999 and 2000, beginning with a modest decline of about 5,000 juvenile arrests and progressing to a decline of just more than 15,000 arrests in 2001. Excepting a brief rise in 2006, juvenile arrests have continued to decline each year until the present. From the peak year of 1998 to the valley year of 2011, juvenile arrests declined by over half (-55%). The net change in juvenile arrests between 1980 and 2011 is an increase of just one-half of 1 percent.



A change in the size of the juvenile population is one factor that affects the number of arrests. Minnesota did experience a 28 percent increase in the size of juvenile population ages 10 to 17 between 1987 and 2001, however juvenile arrest volume increased 150 percent during this time frame. In addition, Minnesota saw a 9 percent decline in the population of youth ages 10 to 17 between 2001 and 2009, whereas arrest volume decreased by over 50 percent. While population changes are one factor influencing arrest counts, it alone is insufficient to explain the magnitude of the rise and fall of juvenile arrests in Minnesota.

Minnesota's juvenile arrest pattern largely follows the national pattern during the same period, though the rise and peak are more pronounced in Minnesota than nationally. The full report includes a comparison of Minnesota arrest data to national data, as well as Minnesota arrest numbers by offense type.

Minnesota Juvenile Arrest Rates

Population changes are compensated for by calculating arrest *rates*. Rates calculate the number of youth involved in the system per 1,000 youth in the population. In this manner, if the number of arrests doubles and so, too, does the population, the *rate* of arrest remains the same. Rates provide information as to whether a greater proportion of youth are experiencing arrest or, perhaps, if the same number of youth are being arrested more frequently.

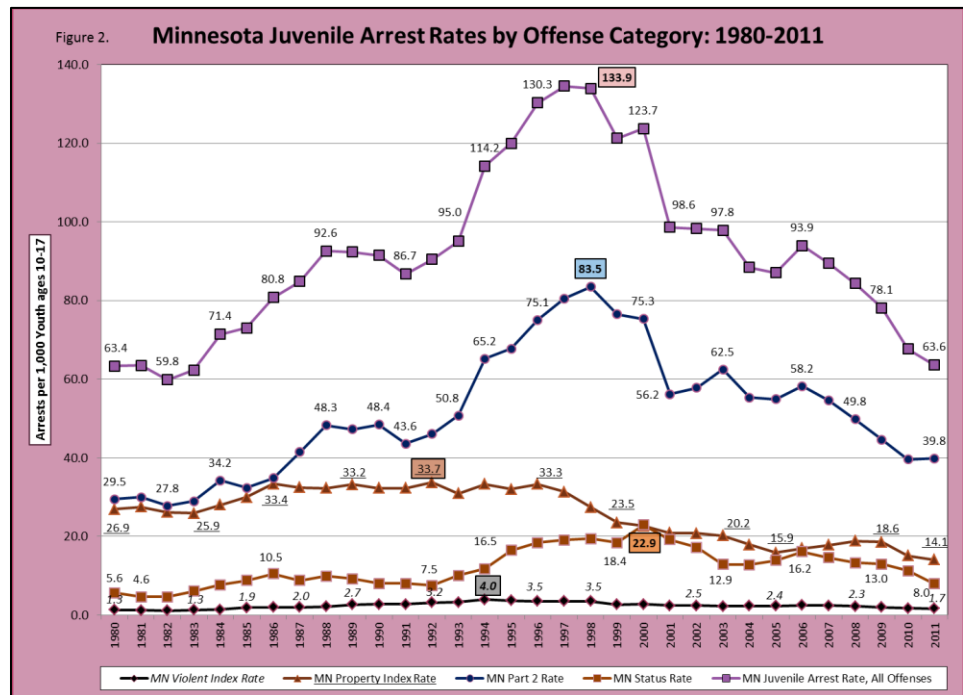
Figure 2 depicts the total juvenile arrest rate (all offenses combined) between 1980 and 2011, as well as rates for the four UCR offense categories.^b The highest rate of juvenile arrests in Minnesota occurred in 1998 when there were 134 arrest events for each 1,000 youth ages 10 to 17 in the population.

Part II crime has the greatest number of offense categories (17) and therefore the greatest number of arrests. In the peak year of 1998, 83.5 Part II arrests were counted for every 1,000 youth ages 10 to 17 in the population. By 1998 the Part II arrest rate was nearly three times greater than in 1980 (29.5 per 1,000).

Part II offenses were not the only category

to increase dramatically through the 1980s and '90s. The peak year for juvenile violent crime arrests was 1994. In 1994, there were four arrests for every 1,000 Minnesota youth ages 10 to 17—three times the arrest rate of 1980 (1.3 per 1,000).

The arrest rate for juvenile status offenses peaked in 2000 at 22.9 per 1,000 youth, which was more than four times higher than in 1980 (5.6 per 1,000).



^b **Part I Violent Index Crimes:** Murder/Manslaughter, Aggravated Assault, Rape & Robbery.

Part I Property Index Crimes: Burglary, Larceny, Motor Vehicle Theft & Arson.

Part II Crimes: Non-Aggravated Assault, Forgery/Counterfeit, Fraud, Embezzlement, Stolen Property, Vandalism, Weapons, Prostitution, Sex Offenses, Narcotics, Gambling, Family/Children, DUI, Liquor Laws, Vagrancy, Disorderly Conduct & All Other non-traffic offenses.

Status Offenses: Curfew/Loitering & Runaway

In all types of crime save one, the rate of arrest remains higher in 2011 than it was in 1980. The exception is the rate of property crime which peaked in 1992 and was at a 30-year low of 14.1 per 1,000 youth in 2011.

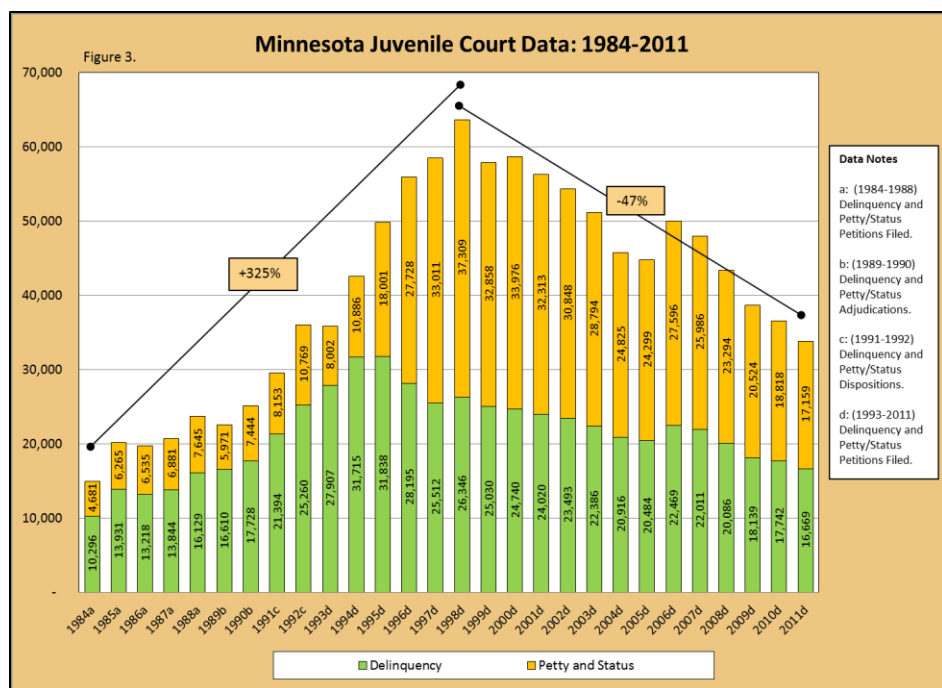
The full report contains data on arrest rates for the four arrest categories compared to national data, as well as data on female arrests, arrests by race, and an exploration of racial disparities at the point of arrest in Minnesota.

Minnesota Juvenile Court Activity

The arrest statistics presented in the previous section are perhaps the most important data in the juvenile justice system, as arrest volume determines the number, gender, age, race and geographic distribution of youth formally entering the system. While schools, social services or community members can initiate complaints against youth, the vast majority come to the attention of prosecutors through a citation or report from law enforcement. The process of establishing legal responsibility for delinquency and determining appropriate sanctions and interventions falls to county attorneys, public defenders and the judiciary.

Figure 3 depicts Minnesota juvenile court cases between 1984 and 2011. Note that these court data are compiled from several different sources, using different methodologies.⁵

Minnesota juvenile court data reveal a steep increase in the number of cases filed in juvenile court related to delinquency, status and petty offenses. The SCAO cautions that the early years of the 1980s may be an under-representation of cases during the transition to a new case-management system in the state. The peak year in terms of total volume of juvenile delinquency, status and petty



offenses was 1998 when total filings exceeded 63,000. Between 1984 and the peak volume year of 1998, juvenile-case volume increased 325 percent. The peak year of case filings (1998) coincides with the peak-volume year for juvenile arrests in Minnesota.

As juvenile arrests declined in Minnesota through the 2000s, so did juvenile case filings. The uptick in juvenile arrests recorded in 2006 coincides with increases in delinquency and status cases filings the same year. Between 1998 and the current low in 2011, the number of juvenile filings decreased by 47 percent or nearly half.

Delinquency Volume

Delinquency filings in Minnesota (misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor, felony) peaked in 1995 at 31,838 (Figure 3). The decline in filings after 1995 is attributed to a change to state statute that allowed county attorneys to reclassify as petty offenses most misdemeanors committed by juveniles.⁶ From a data standpoint, the reclassification moves what would have been delinquency filings into the status offense and petty offense categories. Delinquency filings decreased by 37 percent between 1995 and 2011.

Status/Petty Offense Volume

The aforementioned change to state statute moved many cases from delinquency offenses to petty offenses. As such, the number of status/petty offenses filed jumps from approximately 10,000 in 1994 to 18,000 in 1995. Each subsequent year, status and petty filings increased, peaking in 1998 at more than 37,000. The number of status and petty filings remain above 25,000 through 2003 consistent with peak years of arrest for Part II crimes such as disorderly conduct, non-aggravated assault, liquor law violations and “other offenses.” In total, status and petty filings decreased by 54 percent between 1998 and 2011.

The full report includes petitions by offense level (F, GM, M and status/petty), comparison to national court data, data on youth in Minnesota charged as *Extended Jurisdiction Juveniles (EJJ)* and those certified to stand trial in adult court.

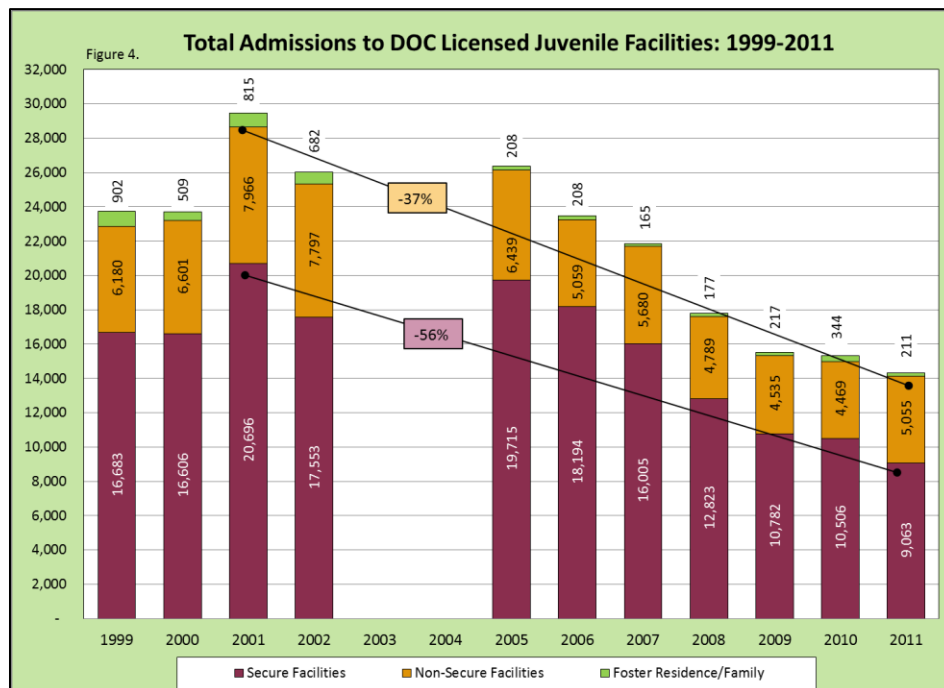
Juvenile Out-of-Home Placements

Youth involved in the juvenile justice system can be placed out of the home at any of the following stages: after arrest, pending the outcome of court proceedings or as a dispositional outcome when court-ordered to a residential program.

The Minnesota DOC collects information on youth admitted to residential facilities using a centralized data repository called the *Statewide Supervision System (S3)*. Prior to S3, all juvenile facilities, secure and non-secure, submitted an annual census form to the DOC *Inspection and Enforcement Unit* indicating total admission numbers for the year. Juvenile facilities continued to submit a census form of admissions to both secure and non-secure beds after the year 2000. Unfortunately, paper submissions prior to 1999 are unavailable and submissions from both 2003 and 2004 have been overwritten with more current data.

Available facility data taken from the facility census submissions are depicted in Figure 4, which illustrates that use of both secure and non-secure correctional beds has generally declined since 2001.⁷ Some of the increase between 2000 and 2001 is related to a greater percentage of facilities reporting data as of 2001. Race data are not reported on the facility census form.

This data source suggests that total facility admissions between 2001 and 2011 declined 51 percent. Secure admissions declined by over half (-56%) from over 20,500 to under 10,000 per year. Similarly, admissions to non-secure beds declined by 37 percent from nearly 8,000 in 2001 to just over 5,000 in 2011. The decrease in both secure and non-secure facility admissions in the past decade is consistent



with the declining number of juvenile arrests over the same time period, but may also be related to changes in facility admission criteria, funding availability or other factors.

The full report includes data on the number of youth admitted to Minnesota's state-run juvenile facilities, the use of adult prisons for juveniles, and an examination of racial disparities in the use of secure correctional settings in Minnesota.

Juvenile Probation

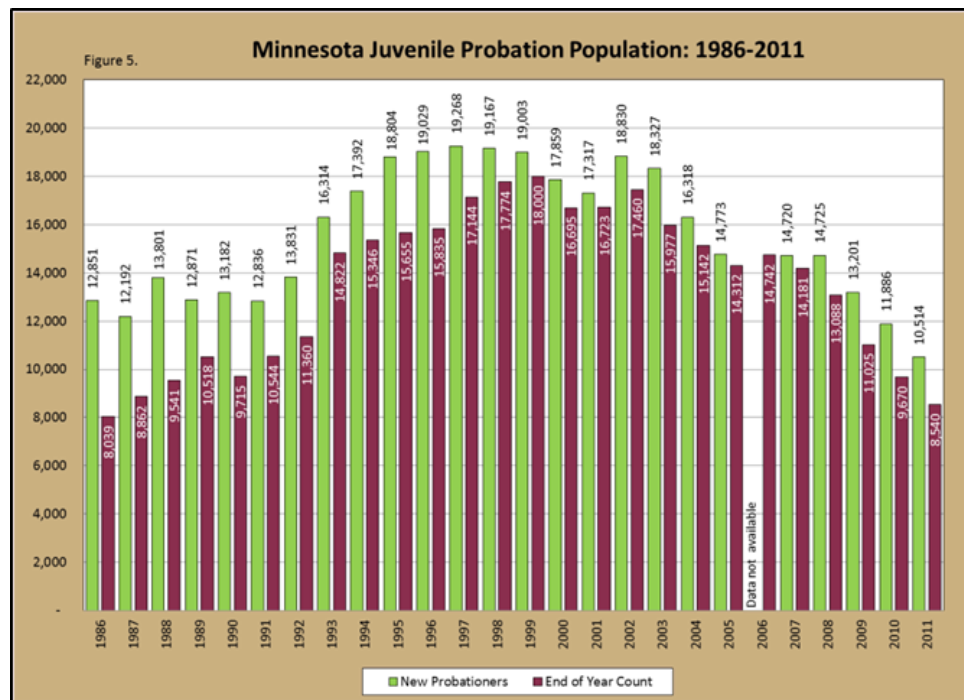
The Minnesota DOC has been compiling data on probation supervision statewide since 1982. Figure 5 depicts data on the number of juvenile probation cases in Minnesota between 1986 and 2011.^c Youth ordered to probation are included in the census. Excluded are youth under supervision as a part of a CHIPS disposition.

The increase in juvenile arrests and petitions filed in court likely resulted in increased numbers of youth court-ordered to community supervision. Between 1986 and 1999, the number of youth on probation at year's-end increased 124 percent.

Under statute and established rules of procedure, youth in Minnesota may be under probation supervision without adjudication. Supervision can be a part of a *continuance for dismissal* disposition as well as a *stay of adjudication* disposition.^{8,9} These provisions allow supervision and accountability for youth without a formal finding of guilt. It is not uncommon in Minnesota for the number of youth on probation to exceed the number of youth adjudicated delinquent.

^c Due to data quality concerns early in data collection, the data presented begin with 1986.

By 2003, the number of youth court-ordered to probation began a steady decline. By 2011, the number of youth on probation at year's end (8,540) was comparable to the number recorded in 1980 (8,039). Fewer new probationers were counted in 2011 (10,514) than in 1980 (12,851).¹⁰ Between 1999 and 2011, year-end probation counts for juveniles declined by over half (-53%).



The full report contains data on youth on probation by gender, race and offense type. National level probation data are also presented as well as Minnesota's data on racial disparities in probation.

Conclusion

State-level data on youth in Minnesota's juvenile justice system over the past 30 years illustrate that both the number of crimes committed by juveniles, and youths' rate of involvement in delinquency increased dramatically through the 1980s and 1990s. Near the turn of the century, however, juvenile delinquency trends reversed, resulting in rates of delinquency in 2010 that were comparable to those recorded in Minnesota in the early 1980s.

The rise and fall of juvenile arrests in Minnesota translated to similar patterns in related juvenile justice functions, including courts, out-of-home placements and community probation. As the volume of youth progressing through the system is affected by arrest activity, so too are the race, gender and offense composition. Since 1980, greater percentages of youth in Minnesota's justice system are youth of color or are female. These youth have different service needs than the white males who dominated the juvenile justice population 30 years ago.

Minnesota's juvenile justice trends closely mirror those observed in national data sets. These similarities suggest that some factors contributing to the rise and subsequent fall of juvenile crime were influenced by national trends. Conversely, the laws, policies and practices of individual state jurisdictions can also impact the volume and composition of youth in the justice system.

The data presented in this report will be placed in the context of national and state-level policies and practices in the second volume of this report series: *Back to the Future: Thirty Years of Minnesota*

Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice. In Minnesota, many changes to juvenile justice statutes, resources, funding and philosophy have occurred since 1980 coupled with changes in the social, political and economic environment. Volume two explores the policies and conditions that contributed to the expansion and contraction of the Minnesota's juvenile justice system, and the philosophies about juvenile justice that we carry into the future.

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